

It's hip to be square

The Age - Metro

For many people, "busy" has become the stock-standard response to "How are you?" But cosier alternatives are slowly creeping into our lives. Whether it's from sheer exhaustion or a conscious decision to choose the cardigan-coveted alternative, listening to your inner Nanna is catching on.

In 2000, celebrities spoke of the meditative effects of knit one, pearl one. Knitting became the new black and Nannas were back in business. The craft and textile world celebrated the revival of what some feared might have become a dying art. And hundreds of Bitch n' Stitch groups began to gather around the world, cuddled in cosy knitting stores.

But knitting was just the beginning of a much broader phenomenon.

As young women and men asked their elders to recover lost stitches, retrieve faded patterns and rifle through sewing tresses for wool remnants, the seduction of the Nanna realm began to weave its magic. All it really took was a cuppa and a bickie and the click-clacking of needles, to herald the arrival of the Nanna Age.

Go on, I dare you. Be a Nanna.

List of Top 10 Nanna-isms

Knitting

It starts with a scarf, then a beanie, and soon you're off in knitting nirvana. And now it's a public art. In 2005 a group of graffiti-knitters formed *Knitta Please* and set out to cover public objects in brightly coloured knitted wraps. The Knittas, aged from 21-70 years old, have so far left their woollen mark as far away as Paris, Houston, Montreal and San Francisco.

Nanna napping

Remember the TAC's 15-minute powernap? In 1999 this clever campaign encouraged drivers to stay alive with this punchy sounding snooze. But today, the Nanna nap has replaced the power nap, on and off the road. We no longer nap with such intensity, brevity or structure.

A forty-year-old male friend of mine is greatly envied for his ability to nap during the day. 'Sleepy Steve' often emerges with ruffled hair and a sneaky smile late in the afternoon. Admitting you need a lie-down takes some courage and friends who nod sagely when you retreat into the land of nod are well worth keeping.

The cuppa

Craving a cuppa is about as sensible as wearing comfy knickers on a day-long bike ride. A cup of tea cures everything – so a group on Facebook claims. Tea-lovers unite in cyber space to celebrate the cuppa. Melbourne's café scene is awash with mismatched china, covered in knitted tea cosies resurrected from the local op-shop. It's the perfect marriage: a steaming pot of tea under a hand-knitted cosie.

Thermoses and Nanna blankets

Check out the cinophiles queuing for the Melbourne International Film Festival each year. With their cut sandwiches, thermoses and blankets - they're all taking a leaf out of Nanna's book. Some of them may indeed *be* Nannas! Taking a Nanna blanket with you to the footy or an outdoor concert also gives you something to wave when the cameras pan the crowd.

Fold-up shopping trolleys

The Queen Victoria Market is jammed with neo-Nannas sporting their fold-out trolleys, trundling off home with their groceries behind them. It's now a slick urban accessory and an ergonomic, eco-friendly alternative to shopping bags – a Nanna trend well ahead of its time.

Long-johns and spencers

As a child, having to wear a spencer to school was a social-disability. They were ugly, up there with petticoats for the most loathed piece of clothing award. These days, spencers and long-johns come in every stripy set of colours. They even double as outer layers. Never before has keeping your kidneys warm been so appealing.

Hankies

In these environmentally-conscious times, a soft, well-ironed hanky makes perfect sense: it won't shred in the wash or leave your nose feeling as if it's been rubbed by a piece of bark. Having a hanky tucked up one's sleeve or under a bra strap brings Nannas some global warming kudos.

Nanna knickers

If Bonds Cottontails continue to appear on shelves in their rectangular plastic packets – competing with Sara Murdoch modelled undies of every style – there must be an awful lot of Nannas out there. Bridget Jones gave Nanna-knickers a knocking, breaking the unwritten rule: Nanna-knickers are for solo loving times only. Designed for comfort, that's the beauty of wearing them. No one but you need ever know how hideously comfortable your knickers are.

Bingo

As the grand-daughter of a bingo addict, I can only assume the recent revival of bingo nights in pubs and bingo television shows are inspired in part by Nannas. It's hard to think of your Nanna playing bingo in a smoky pub, with a host who seems compelled to interpret each number as a different position from the Karma Sutra. My Nanna had a wicked sense of humour, so I guess it's possible the bingo hall had its wilder moments after all.

Lawn bowls

The revival of lawn bowls clubs as the 20-something venue of choice is a definite ode to Nannas, decked out in whites on bended knee. It's possible that 1970s drink prices are the real draw-card, but Nannas have gained respect as revellers roll their lawn bowls abysmally down the pitch, realising it's much harder than it looks. And while there may not be much bowling going on, this Nanna sport has definitely saved many a venue from the wrecker's ball.

BONUS Nanna-ism...

Plastic hair-coverings

You may not have heard of this one. It's perfect for those who spend hours each morning, sculpting their hair into place, knowing that the elements can send their locks skyward in an instant.

My Nanna wore a plastic hair-covering to keep the rain off her newly set 'do'. She wasn't alone. So did all the other Nannas. It might not seem the most glamorous accessory, but just imagine the untapped potential for designer hair-coverings.

Surely there must be a stylin' Nanna stirring at the very thought of it...

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